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Idaho National Lab employee donates kidney to co-worker

IDAHO FALLS -- Would you donate a kidney to a family member? What about a friend? A co-worker? One Idaho National Laboratory employee has done just that. Two employees at the INL Advanced Test Reactor Complex have recently undergone kidney surgeries — one as the kidney donor and the other as the recipient. Both surgeries have been successful and the two employees are now recovering.

Most people might consider donating a kidney to a co-worker to be above and beyond the call of duty. But the INL employee donor doesn't think what he did was anything out of the ordinary. In fact, he doesn't want recognition. He quietly stepped up and has gained the admiration of all who have heard his story.

"People do unusual things to help other people sometimes," he said.

The kidney donor is also an INL Employee Safety Team representative, and that safety culture mentality carries over into his everyday life. He said his involvement in the EST has taught him to actively care about his fellow employees.

"I don't question if a chance comes up to make a difference — I just do it," he said.

Although organ donation goes to an extreme, the donor compares it to any other personal action he would take to help a fellow employee — something as simple as spreading ice melt on a slippery sidewalk or wiping up a puddle of melted snow inside a building to prevent a fall.

"INL fosters a culture of caring," he said. "I'd like to think if I was in that position, someone here would step up and do the same for me."

That caring culture is also evident in the actions of both employees' co-workers, who have been donating time and money to help ease the financial burden and offset medical expenses for both the kidney donor and recipient. ATR employees Melanie Shirling-Powell, Shayly Wasylow and Kathryn Nii organized fundraising efforts and have set up a savings account to collect donations. So far they've raised about \$2,000.

Anyone interested in contributing can make a deposit directly into account number 100020680 at any branch of East Idaho Credit Union.

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of DOE's strategic goal areas: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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